expressed apprehensions with regard to the quality of tea from Assam;

(b) if so, whether the tea producers from Germany visited the tea gardens in Assam on this account; and

(c) if so, at what conclusion tea producers from Germany arrived at after their visit to the tea gardens?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) No Sir. The Government have not received any representation from the tea growers expressing concern about exports of tea to Germany and the United States of America. There is no serious concern on quality of Indian tea including tea's produced in Assam and exported to USA and Germany since Indian teas for exports conform to International Standards on quality.

(b) No tea importer from Germany has visited the tea gardens of Assam recently under the auspices of the Tea Board.

(c) Does not arise.

Patenting of Indian System of Medicines

1144. SHRI MAHESH CHANDRA SHARMA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) The purpose of deletion of Section 39 of the Patents Act, 1970;

(b) how it would be possible to check taking of patents about sensitive technolgoies;

(c) whether it is a fact that some ex-senior scientists of CSIR have taken patents on Neem without the permission of Government; and

(d) how many cases have come to the notice of Govern ment where patent on Indian system of medicine have been taken by Indians in foreign countries without the permission of Government?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) Erstwhile Section 39 imposed constraints on Indian investors and restricted the flexibility available to them as they had to wait for six weeks before filing for a patent outside the country. In patenting, since every day counts, a person who files his application first, gets precedence over those filing subsequantly. Therefore, by removing this restriction, Indian

inventors have been granted the freedom of filing outside the country at any point of time, without waiting for the additional period of six weeks for seeking the prior approval of the Central Government.

(c) and (d) Government is not aware of any such case. However, patents are granted by respective Governments under their patent laws and no information is being maintained about patents being taken on Indian system of medicines.

Indo-Myanmar Trade Treaty

1145. SHRI W. ANGOU SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the progress of infrastructure development of the Indo-Myanmar trade treaty;

(b) whether government are aware that the new infrastructure of Myanmar near our border town Moreh had been completed and is functioning more properly than that of our old existed infrastructure; and

(c) whether Government are aware that the said trade agreement has lost our earlier advantage in trade?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) The Indo-Myanmar Border Trade Agreement signed in 1994 does not specifically provide for infrastructure development in.

(b) Government of India have established optical fibre cable link between Moreh and Imphal and this link has been put through for traffic even though some test are being carried out. Further, expansion of existing telephone exchange capacity at Moreh has been planned for the current year which is likely to be completed by December, 1999. With a view to facilitate border trade with Myanmar, the Government of Manipur have taken adequate measures to improve infrastructure in Moreh. Empowered Committee on Critical Infrastructure Balance Scheme (CIB) has decided to sanction an amount of Rs. 70 lakhs for the development of external roads in Moreh.

(c) No Sir. India's exports to Myanmar during the year 1998-99 were of the order US$ 1.20 million as against imports of US$ 0.91 million from Myanmar through the border route.